

Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care Regionalization Process

The Balance of State Continuum of Care [BoS] is a 96-county service area, region or community. Each county within the BoS is not equal in terms of population or availability of housing services.

Requirements of the BoS Coordinated Entry Process [CEP] include several key elements: (1) the system is person-centered; not program-centered; (2) any person entering CEP receives a standardize intake and assessment process that evaluates their presenting needs and identifies the housing service type that best fits their homeless circumstance, (3) a Priority List (PL) or By-Name List that ranks each housing service applicant by priority of need so that people in high risk situations will be housed first (subject to their affirmation). In other words, as a community of housing service providers we are required to have uniform intake procedural standards that promote a client-center environment where high risk individuals or families are prioritized for housing placement, but all people that enter the system receive fair and efficient service. Equally important is the underlying component of the process provides the clients to have final authority to accept or decline the housing service offered to them for the resolution or assistance with their homeless condition.

Implementation of the CE process then requires uniform procedures for intake – procedures that will be discussed elsewhere – and an operational plan to serve the entire geographic area based upon available services and client acceptance of offered services. Intake and placement onto the PL will happen through a network of physical intake sites spread throughout the BoS service area and a CoC-wide virtual intake site (or call center system) for 24/7 support. Removal from the PL and placement into housing services will be implemented at a regional level and then statewide (where clients are willing to re-location anywhere within the BoS service area). We believe this will promote effective and rapid housing of homeless Iowans.

Procedural Guidelines for BoS Regionalization:

1. Identify existing HUD- or VA-funded housing service providers to serve as physical intake sites. Allow them to become service hubs for the formation of regions.
2. Integrate existing local planning groups and develop new local planning groups to coordinate and facilitate cooperation between regional community stakeholders that serve homeless populations.
3. Once established allow each region to determine if they prefer a centralized intake or no wrong door approach for physical site intake within their region. Each regional planning group will take ownership of PL activity and support Point-in-Time efforts throughout their region of the BoS CoC. They will identify or work with a selected lead agency.
4. Each regional lead agency will promote cooperation between local homeless service providers and serve as the primary contact point for CEP and related HMIS communication.
5. Default region where no strong leadership emerges from the HUD-funded grantees will be community action agency service agencies (CAAs). The CAA network serves all 99 counties in Iowa with services for low-income people. In rural areas with few or no HUD-funded housing services, we believe there is a synergy with working with an existing service network with outreach facilities that serve people with a risk of becoming homeless.